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We have also noticed the following passages.

"Which (pleasures) are succeeded by the most bitter consequences, and (are) the precursors of our ruin."

"They might expect a similar treatment."

These are trivial errors: but we certainly have a right to say to the physician, "Heal thyself."

Woman: or Ida of Athens, by Miss Owenson, 4 vols. 12mo. p.p. 979. Longman, Hurst, and Rees, London, 1809.

Continued from P. 143, No. VII.

THE capture of Osmyn gives our heroine another opportunity of displaying herself. She is described as wandering through the scene of carnage to discover his body; at length on discovering the truth, she again goes to the Acropolis (Anglicæ, the citadel) to plead in his favour.—But her application now is not equally successful. She is brought to the Aga, and induced by the hopes of saving Osmyn from the tortures with which he is threatened to consent to marry his persecutor. But that very night the Aga's daughter, who was in love with Osmyn contrives his escape, and flies with him to Russia. Ida escapes to her father's, and there receives the intelligence that her hated spouse is no more, having been put to death by the suspicious government which he served.

A new character now appears, and gives rise to a train of incidents which form in our opinion the only entertaining part of these volumes; yet it is a hazardous pleasure. The style and sentiments are of that enervating, voluptuous tendency, which excite emotions the most dangerous. The pleader in the cause of virtue, for such is the character to which we conceive Miss Owenson wished to attain, has assumed the air and habiliments of the most dangerous auxiliary of vice.

An Englishman resident at Naples, a professed sensualist, of the most refined order, goes to Athens in quest of those pleasures which variety alone can furnish to the votary of the senses. In the summary description of character, Miss Owenson has merit; al-

though she constantly fails in its developement, as it incidentally displays itself through the circumstances of the narration. The present personage may serve as an example of her talent.

"The Englishman was born of the younger branch of an illustrious family. He was impressed with an extravagant sense of the value of rank, because rank in the early part of his life had been his sole possession; ardent from nature, luxurious by education, he pursued the path to opulence merely as the medium by which pleasure (in its common acceptation) was to be obtained; he pursued it like a man of elevated notion, in political career, and pursued it with a success no less the result of his talents than of his fortune. The evil chances of education had given him many faults, but they had also left him many virtues; the leading traits of excellence which illuminated his character were all his own; and the leading vice which shadowed its brightness, owed existence to the influence of woman. Of an ardent, impetuous, and affectionate character; at an age when the receptive power of men are so eager for impression, and so fatally capable of rendering that impression decisive, his heart had been first touched, his passions had been first awakened, by one who with more art than beauty, more ability than principle, and more passion than sentiment, charmed his imagination by her brilliancy, his self-love by her ardour, and deceived his hopes and betrayed his confidence, by that train of conduct, which depraved feeling and vitiated habits inevitably produce in woman.

"With a general and passionate admiration, united to a total want of esteem for women, his opinion of the sex was founded on the first impression given him by an individual: he had therefore never married, and never intended to marry. He laughed at the man who voluntarily threw his honour into the keeping of a being, who (drawing the inference from his own experience) he believed so seldom capable of preserving her own; he laughed at the man who voluntarily hung a chain over his pleasures, and devoted himself to anxiety at home,

while enjoyment solicited his acceptance abroad: he believed that the woman whom prudence would induce him to marry, his taste would impel him to decline; and that her whom he would adore as a mistress, he could never depend on as a wife.

He was now no longer young; and though he had seen much of the world, though he too generally took his sentiments from the high, but frequently false tone of the circle in which he lived, yet something of the untarnished gloss of nature still remained. The ardent feelings of his being, frequently deposed the factitious principles of his character; and the warm impulse of a moment sometimes overthrew the artful system of a year. Although he had observed much, he had reflected, he had combined but little; and his life, gay and polished as his manners, while it pointed his wit, while it sharpened his shrewdness, rendered him more alive to a foible than observant of a quality, more attracted by the living manners as they rose, than attentive to the human passions as they unfolded themselves, under the pressure and influence of human wants."

An entire volume is occupied in relating the rise and progress of his acquaintance with Ida, whom he attempts to seduce; but though he caught her imagination, which is described as very inflammable, he failed in interesting her heart, and returns baffled and disappointed to England.

The remainder of the tale may be summed up in a few words. By one of these violent exertions of authority too common in despotic governments, Ida's father is forced to quit Athens with his family; they escape to England. On their arrival there they find that their banker has failed. They are of course reduced to extreme distress, from which they are at length relieved by the Englishman, to whose house Ida in a manner almost miraculous to any one but a heroine of a novel, had strayed while looking for relief for her father who was dying in prison. He afterwards maintains Ida and her young brothers, at his own expense. In this place we must stop to comment upon an inconsistency of char-

racter. A man, versed as the Englishman is described to be in the female character, would never have had recourse to the gross expedient of making himself the open protector of a high-spirited woman, whose heart he had failed to conquer, and whose eyes were open to his designs. So many ways would have presented themselves of relieving her distresses in a more delicate manner, which she would not have declined, because ignorant of their tendency, and which when their author was discovered, would have laid her under a weight of obligation almost impossible to be shaken off from the manner in which it was conferred, that we are surprized at the negligence or want of invention in the author, in not having recourse to them. As she tells the story, Ida very naturally rejects the proffered bounty, is again reduced into the greatest distress and again relieved by the interference of a relation who unexpectedly appears in England. She is now restored to rank and opulence. The Englishman abjures his former infidelity of woman, and proposes marriage, his offers are again rejected. Osmyn now appears under the character of a Russian Officer, and after an *eclaircissement* which commences at a masquerade, that amusement so happily invented for the relief of distressed writers of romance, she marries the object of her first attachment and settles with him in Russia.

The style of this work is very defective, abounding in a superfluity of words, which instead of contributing to accuracy or ornament, obscures the sentiment by distracting the mind. An excessive affectation, displaying itself in forced sentiments and distorted expressions, pervades the whole. To understand a modern novel, an accurate knowledge of the language in which it is written is insufficient; French, Italian and Spanish are indispensable. Miss Owenson, determined to leave all competitors behind, goes still farther. To read *Ida*, we must understand Greek; though in some cases she is so complaisant to the ignorance of her fair readers, as to tack the explanation to the tail of the learned word, so that a page of her book might sometimes

be mistaken for a new invented vocabulary, or a misplaced column of *spelling and explaining*. For instance, take the following description of Ida's dress.

"Her drapery pure and light as drifted snow, resembled in its folds that of the priestesses who form the procession in the metopes of the temple of Minerva; a thousand shining jetty curls were drawn through the antient *cekriphale* or *golden net* that enclosed her luxuriant hair, the simple anadema bound *its wreath* across her snowy forehead, and the *Astropeplon*, or *embroidered scarf*, caressed her neck and shoulders, or floated lightly on the passing gale: she touched at intervals the *cythara* on which she leaned, and blushed, and smiled, and glowed, is all the *conscious triumph* of youth, of beauty and inspiring love."

A variety of singular expressions may also be pointed out.

"*Luxuriated* in that enjoyment, which Ionian gales might still bestow,"—

"The admiration he excited became at once the reward and *stimulation* of his talents,"—"Nor canst thou ever *obliviate*."—

We also find the word which an uninstructed Englishman would call *sensual*, in one place written *sensuous*, and in another, no doubt for the sake of variety *sensurous*.

But what we think principally exceptionable, is the incorrect notions of religion and morality interspersed through these pages.

"Nature," says Miss Owenson, in the character of Ida's preceptor; "nature has only given us desires, whose gratification is enjoyment; but society in its gradual estrangement from her dictates, engenders passions which become the scourge of those who cherish them; man, naturally beneficent, becomes a tyrant—man, naturally free, becomes a slave; and religion, which is of nature, conveyed through the senses to the soul, awakening its gratitude, and commanding its adoration, becomes an incomprehensible dogma, propagated by cruelty and fanaticism, disfigured by human invention on every side, breaking the tie of human sympathy, scattering discord and disorder through nations, and imposing its belief by eternal terrors. In every

religion may be traced the arrogant faith of its own infallibility, and in the breast of every fanatic sectarian is established a secret inquisition by which the opinion of others is tried and condemned. On every side virtue and felicity are of nature; on every side vice and misery are of man.

This is the genuine doctrine of the School of Bridgetuna Botherum. We shall add but one more.

"Love is an involuntary affection; it resists the law of volition, and deprives the mind of that free agency which distinguishes it under the influence of other passions. *Every one loves as long as he can*; but the sentiment is not to be commanded into existence, nor is the period of its duration to be defined. It argues a profound ignorance of human nature, to expect eternal fidelity in a lover; and the woman who lives only to lament an inconstant, mistakes weakness and want of pride and of reflection for sensibility and virtue."

These words are the echo of Euphrosyne in *Comus*.

"All I ask of mortal man,
Is to love me while he can."

Let us now see what is adduced to palliate the defects of this work. We are told in the preface that the author "has been *necessitated* to compose with great rapidity," (we make no doubt of the rapidity of the composition, every page bears disgraceful proofs of it, but why necessitated we are not told) that "her little works have been always printed from an illegible manuscript in one country, while she was the resident of another; that she has written almost as many volumes as she has years; and that she is at once indolent and volatile in her literary character." We cannot, however, see the weight of these apologies. That the printing has been very carelessly supervised, these are sufficient proofs; were it otherwise, we should not have seen the sun at one time setting to the east of Athens, in the *Euxine*, instead of to the west, in the *Gulph of Engia*. Nor would we have seen a pile of ruins illuminated at midnight by the rays of the *morn* (the moon.) But we see no reason why the book was not printed where the author could

have had an opportunity of preparing it for the public eye. We would recommend it to this young lady, for by her own mode of calculation, we guess her to be about seventeen, instead of pleading one fault in palliation of another, or setting up her volumes as mile-stones to mark her progress thro'

life, either to relinquish the profession of author altogether, or subject her imagination to the discipline of meditation and reflection, which alone can qualify her for the honourable but arduous task of instructing her sex, by setting before them a model of WOMAN for their imitation. Q.

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